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National Wildlife Refuge System Celebrates Centennial

President Theodore Roosevelt set aside land for the first refuge at Pelican Island, Florida on March 14, 1903. Since then, the Refuge system has grown to almost 95 million acres comprising over 540 refuges—at least one Refuge in every state and U.S. Territory. To celebrate this milestone, refuges across the country held Centennial celebrations on March 14th. Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge’s (RMANWR) celebration included a native American invocation, guest speakers Congressmen Mark Udall and Bob Beauprez, a representative from Senator Wayne Allard’s office and Rick Coleman, Region 6 Chief of Refuges for the USFWS. The celebration also featured a portrayal of Wayne Kroegel, grandson of the first refuge manager on Pelican Island.

“The event was a wonderful way to recognize the people who had the vision to establish the first wildlife refuge in 1903,” said Christine Vigil, USFWS outdoor recreation planner. “It was also a time to reflect on how far we’ve come since 1903 and to remain connected and committed to our Refuge mission.”

The Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society, Foster Wheeler and Shell Oil Company awarded college scholarships to Adams City and Montbello High School students for their winning essays about what refuges mean to them.

As part of the celebration, each refuge across the country placed and sealed into a time capsule mementos about its specific refuge. RMANWR’s time capsule included a first day issue stamp commemorating the Centennial, past and present aerial photographic views of RMANWR, staff photos and the Centennial issue of USFWS’s publication *Wildlife News*. The time capsule will be on display at the RMANWR Visitor Center, open every Saturday and Sunday from 8:00-4:30 p.m. USFWS employees will open the time capsule in 100 years. ■



RMA Refuge Manager Dean Rundle emcees the Centennial celebration.

Photo by: Mike Mauro

MILESTONES

Comments are always welcome.
Please forward to:
Public Relations Department
Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Bldg. 111
Commerce City, CO 80022

(303) 289-0136
www.rma.army.mil

Chief Public Relations
Ruth Mecham

Editor
Susan Ulrich

DPRA, Inc.,
Media Design Group

Writer
Carla Johnson

Art Director/Graphic Designer
Kathy Fisher

Photographers
Rich Keen • Josh Barchers

ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARSENAL

MILESTONES

SUMMER 2003

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Photo property of U.S. Army

The prairies of the Arsenal became an avenue for hundreds of thousands of east-coast gold prospectors rushing to the 1859 rumors of precious metals buried deep in the mountains.



Photos by: Josh Barchers/DPRA, Inc.

Water is applied to the soil keeping dust conditions to a minimum.

Dust Management Policy WILL KEEP DUST TO A MINIMUM

A zero dust management policy has been in effect for all of the Rocky Mountain Arsenal (RMA) contaminated cleanup projects since the remediation effort began in 1996. Cleanup projects are consistently treated with water to ensure dust does not affect employees and our neighbors. Now, with many projects completed, the site is entering a new chapter in its environmental cleanup program.

The selected remedy for many cleanup projects at the Arsenal is to excavate the waste or contamination and transfer it to an on-site landfill or an on-site disposal basin. A few of the remaining projects at the RMA consist of leaving the waste in place and constructing a protective cap over the project. In order to build protective caps over these areas, approximately 4.3 million cubic yards of clean soil from RMA will be excavated and placed over the project sites. Once this is completed, the caps will be re-seeded with native grasses and shrubs. To ensure re-seeding is successful, the soil used for the caps needs to be dry and loose. Taking this new phase of cleanup into account, regulatory agencies and RMA engineers will be modifying the zero dust policy. The new policy will apply only to the clean soil used to fill excavated areas before caps are constructed as well as the soil needed for cap construction. Cleanup projects that are excavating contaminated material will continue to be managed to the zero dust policy standards.

The modifications to the dust policy include taking into consideration Colorado’s spring weather and potential wind and dust storms. With large amounts of clean soil exposed, there could be times when dust may be present at RMA. Water will not be applied to clean soils under these conditions in support of the goal of placing dry, loose soil for cap construction. Therefore, minimal dust suppression efforts will be taken for clean areas only under the revised dust management plan.

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Employees Cut Costs

Increase Productivity of Arsenal

Wrapping up its fourth year, RMA's Cost/Productivity Improvement Program (C/PIP) identified almost \$2.6 million in cost savings this year as well as ways to improve the safety, quality and productivity of RMA's work. One hundred and eleven employees participated in the program and submitted 37 ideas for implementation. This brings the total to 410 participants and over \$16.5 million in savings since the program began in 1999.

The approved submittals included ideas such as re-using treated water from remediation work, a valuable conservation benefit during Colorado's drought. Another suggestion, the Safety Observer Program, raises awareness and promotes a safety culture within RMA's office environment. The program integrates safety in daily work activities by encouraging individual participation, safe working behavior and a commitment to recognize and resolve safety concerns. The program will help decrease injuries and accidents that result in time lost from work by raising awareness of the importance of safety at RMA.

"Thinking 'out of the box,' by changing the normal way of doing things, is what generally results in these cost savings and improvements," said Mark Thomson, C/PIP

program sponsor. He emphasized that ideas don't need to result in high dollar savings.

Most of this year's submittals improved either employee safety or productivity and were in the \$5,000-\$20,000 range, with suggestions saving as little as \$150. Thomson emphasized that the small dollar submittals are every bit as important as the large savings submitted under the program.

"It's not so much about the money, although that's a very important aspect," said Thomson. "It's primarily to encourage and promote good ideas while giving employees another avenue to have their ideas implemented and gain recognition." He pointed out that the committee encourages all employees who have ideas to come forward. "Yours might be a \$150 idea this year, but because you have a mindset of looking for opportunities for improvement, you might have the million dollar idea next year."

Expectations are high that employees will continue to generate new ideas to help improve the cost-effectiveness, quality and safety of the RMA's cleanup program. ■

Arsenal Deletes Western Tier Parcel

Known as the "Western Tier Parcel," located on the southwestern boundary of RMA and bordering Commerce City to the west, the removal of this land from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Priorities List (NPL) is another milestone for this former Army chemical manufacturing site.

"The Army can now move forward with their process from federal ownership to the sale of this property. It's gratifying to know the cleanup activities on the parcel will ultimately result in its future use as a recreational and commercial benefit to the nearby community," said Laura Williams, Project Leader for EPA.

The next step in this process is to transfer the land to the General Services Administration (GSA). The Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge Act of 1992 mandates this land be sold and the money used for the construction of the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) visitor/education center that will benefit both the community and the Refuge. A 1997 amendment to the act directed that the land be conveyed to Commerce City for "fair market value."

The GSA will be working with Commerce City and the Prairie Gateway Trust Authority, a specially created land trust to act as Commerce City's agent, to negotiate the purchase. Although development plans are not confirmed, Commerce City is considering developing the land for community and commercial purposes. Additionally, development plans may also include a large-size hotel /conference center, outdoor recreation-oriented retail outlets, a wildlife campus, office development and/or a community park/open space with connection to the Denver-metropolitan bike trail system. ■

Dust Management continued from page one

The new dust management policy is expected to be approved and ready for implementation by the summer of 2003. Once in place, RMA neighbors will see very little difference in day-to-day operations. While the amount of dust from the construction of the cap areas may increase during a strong windstorm, very little, if any, dust will be visible on a typical day.

Considering these modifications, RMA has a plan in place to modify construction activities if dust is traveling too close to the fence line perimeter. These modifications include lowering traffic speeds or spraying haul roads with water. If dust approaches the fence line, dust control efforts will increase up to and including stopping work until conditions improve. Neighbors can rest assured that if they see dust, it does not come from contaminated areas, which will be managed as diligently as ever to our standard zero dust policy. ■



RMA and Denver Public Schools Host Meet Montbello 2003

Montbello area students and parents participated in the Meet Montbello 2003...Discover Your Future education and career fair at Montbello High School (MHS) on April 5th. This event, which was a new approach to the annual Meet Montbello summer picnic, featured information booths and representatives not only from RMA but from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Tri-County Health Department and various schools, businesses and organizations. Exhibitors included the University of Colorado, Colorado School of Mines, Metropolitan State College, ReMax Southeast, the Denver Public and Montbello Libraries, and the Denver Police and Fire Departments. These local businesses contributed time, materials and sponsorship money to Meet Montbello 2003...Discover Your Future. Sponsors of the event included local businesses such as Foster Wheeler Environmental Corp., Shell Oil Company, Wells Fargo, Samsonite, 1st Bank, Montbello Dry Cleaners, Champion of Denver and Mr. Dan Millis.

"This event is a great idea. Any time the community can come together like this for a common good it is a sign that we believe in our future and what it holds for us," said Montbello High School Principal, Hansel Gunn. "We're sending a message that the students of this community are important and we care about them."

"We hope this year's event inspired and motivated Montbello's young people by showing them a small part of the world of opportunities available to them," said Meet Montbello Planning Committee member, Della Swanson. "We have a lot of ambitious and motivated young people hungry to know what possibilities await them. Hopefully, Meet Montbello provided them with answers to some of their questions."

The partnership among RMA, MHS and Denver Public Schools allowed for the exchange of ideas among all parties and offered the students of MHS the opportunity to participate in the planning and execution of the event. Meet Montbello also served as a way to educate RMA's neighbors about the environmental cleanup and transition of RMA to an asset for the Montbello community as one of the nation's premier urban, national wildlife refuges. ■